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**JHAHKRY IN
DARJEELING**

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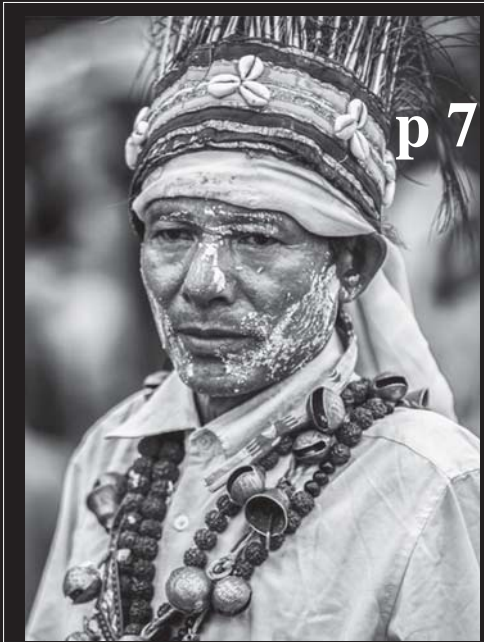
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JHARKHY IN DARJEELING

By Eagam Khaling

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Sandip C. Jain

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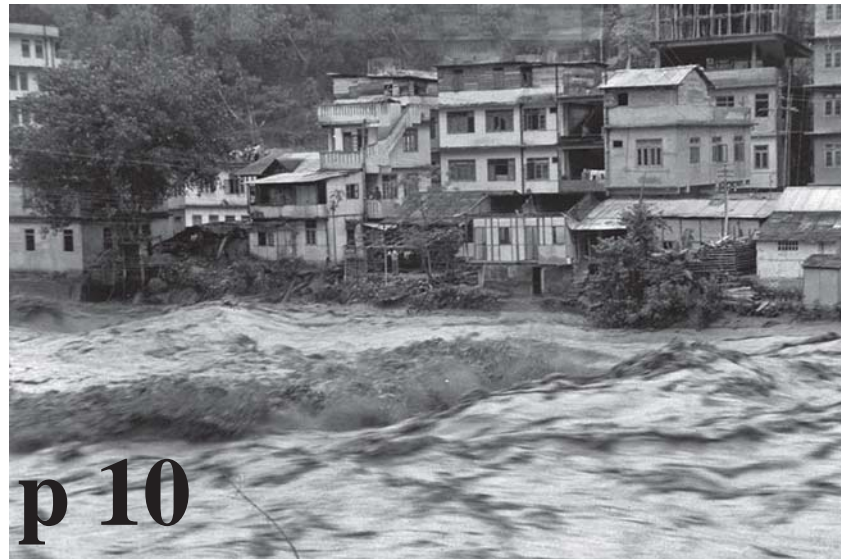
himalayantimes@rediffmail.com

himalayantimes2020@gmail.com

BLOG

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Sandip C. Jain writes on the disturbing trend of importing MPs into the
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only to forget all about it once elected.

PEELING THE WRONG POTATO

Exactly four years back, in September 2014, I had made a commitment to you, my readers. This was immediately after Mr. S.S. Aluwalia had won the Parliamentary Elections from the Darjeeling Parliamentary constituency. In an article titled DEFEAT IN VICTORY in which I had tried to make an analysis on the Lok Shaba Elections in the Darjeeling seat, I had made that promise.

I had written that although Mr. Aluwalia had won with a seemingly convincing margin, his victory was more due to the votes that the BJP garnered in the Siliguri, Matigara-Naxalbari, Chopra and Phansidewa Assembly segments rather than due to the votes that the GJM managed to secure for the BJP in the Darjeeling Hills.

Anyway this is not the matter on which the commitment was made nor the subject of this article. What I had committed to in that article was to discuss the merits or demerits of having an imported MP in Darjeeling after four of his five year term had been completed.

I am quoting below the first two paragraphs of the article DEFEAT IN VICTORY which was published in September 2014.

History is proof that the Gorkhas and the Sikhs have fought several of their battles together. Being, arguably, the two most decorated martial races in India, the Sikhs and the Gorkhas have been "Brothers-in-Arms" in many epic battles both within and outside the country. They have had many famous victories together - several battles in World Wars I and II, the three wars that India fought

after independence, as well as the Kargil War. They have served well together. The Kripan and the Khukuri have together slashed through many defenses.

I wonder if this was a consideration in the GJM leadership offering Mr. S.S. Aluwalia a ticket from the Darjeeling Parliamentary constituency - or maybe not. Maybe, Mr. Aluwalia was the only choice offered to the GJM leadership by the BJP high command - a kind of take it or lump it offer. Well, whatever it may be, the fact remains that Mr. Aluwalia is our Member of Parliament for the next five years, which mean the Gorkha-Sikh brotherhood continues. It's another matter that this present honeymoon between the two has a Bengali setting - both being very much a part and parcel of West Bengal. One can only hope that this honeymoon does not have a bitter ending like the one with Jashwant Singh, with Missing Diaries being filed against his continued absence from his constituency.

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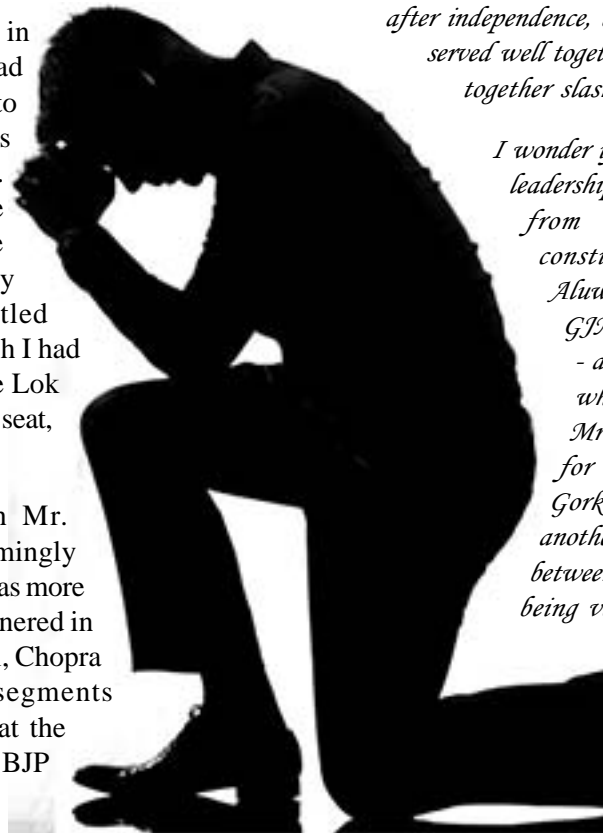
But this article is not about the merits or demerits of Mr. Aluwalia as our imported Member of Parliament. I will write about it after another four years - for now this piece is aimed to discuss if the victory of the honourable Sardar

.....

Exactly four years after the above article was served before you, I, as per my pledge, sit down to discuss the merits or demerits of having cast (or rather made to cast) our votes in favour of Mr. Aluwalia.

Let me start by reminding you that most of us cast our votes for Mr. Aluwalia because we were told by the Hill leadership of that time that A VOTE FOR ALUWALIA WAS A VOTE FOR A SEPARATE STATE.

So did the victory of Mr. Aluwalia do any good to the statehood demand? Did this demand receive any boost after the good



Sardar started representing the Gorkhas of Darjeeling? Did the voice of the Gorkhas become stronger after our *Nepali Topi* was worn by a Sardarji over his *padgri*? Has the sentimental pleas of the Gorkhas managed to slice through the stone-like hearts of the Delhi hawks after the *kripan* and the *khukri* joined forces?

A big fat NO to all the above questions.

The bitter fact is that the final destination of the Gorkhas today is further than it ever was. Being that “Pilot” who was supposed to lift the statehood demand from the Hills of Darjeeling and zoom it into the corridors of North Block in Delhi, Mr. Aluwalia failed to even fire the ignition, forget about the liftoff or a safe landing in Delhi. But then frankly there was no realistic chance of any plane taking off from Darjeeling when the pilot entrusted with navigating the plane was permanently lost in the corridors of power somewhere in the BJP headquarters.

The sad truth it appears is that the Party that our “Pilot” belongs to has been misleading the simple residents of the Darjeeling/Kalimpong Hills and showing them dreams that they can never fulfill considering the larger picture. The dreams of the Bharitya Janta Party to storm into Nabonna/Writers Building will die off forever if it ever agrees to separate the Darjeeling hills from the rest of West Bengal. Their vision of forming a Government in that State in which one of their founding fathers, Syama Prasad Mukherjee, was born, will vanish into thin air for all times to come. It's mere common sense- they would never want to lose their leg just because the designer shoe they are wearing has started to pinch- the leg being West Bengal and the designer shoe being us. Being one of the only two BJP Parliamentarians in West Bengal, Mr. Aluwalia will never do anything to hamper his party's prospects in the State. We in the Hills were too innocent not to have realized this sooner- that is if we really have realized it at all.

The constitution is very clear on the topic of creation of new states- it can be created by passing a bill to that effect by a simple majority in both houses of Parliament. The bill is

referred by the President of India to the concerned State but the opinion of the State counts for nothing. This means that had the BJP really wanted, with its brute majority in both the Houses of Parliament, it could easily have created a state in the Darjeeling hills by now. It's a matter of sincerity and if not the entire party, Mr. Aluwalia should have stood up and convinced his party bosses. After all it was he who received votes showing his voters dreams of a separate state.

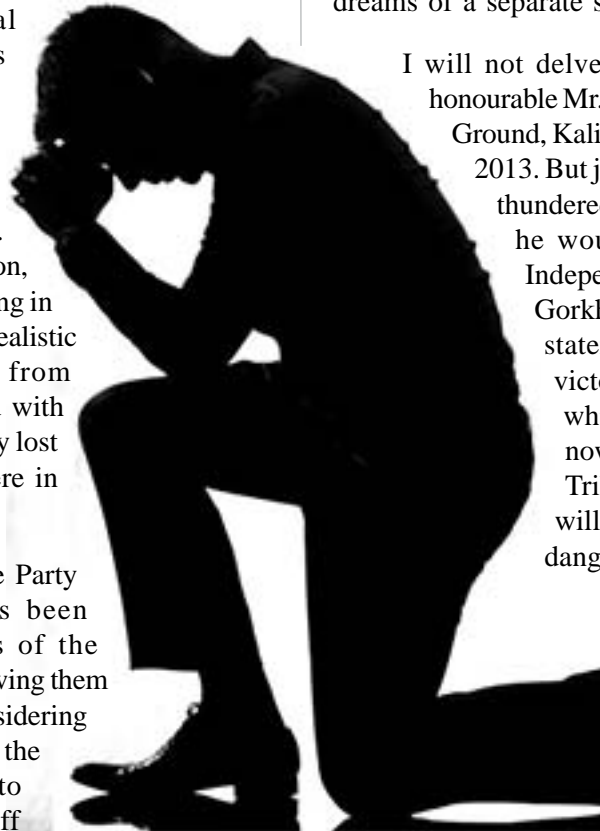
I will not delve into what his colleague, the honourable Mr. Rudra Pratap Rudy, said at Mela Ground, Kalimpong, on Independence Day in 2013. But just to remind my readers, he had thundered amidst rapturous applause that he would celebrate the next year's Independence Day in the new state of Gorkhaland. These were the type of statements that gave Mr. Aluwalia victory in the following year all of which are conveniently forgotten now. This year I am sure that the Tribal Status for the 11 Hill tribes will be the new lollipop that will be dangled before the Hill voters.

Lets come to our dreams now...

Speaking just before the Lok Sabha Elections somewhere in Siliguri, Mr. Narendra Modi, the honourable Prime Minister had said, “*the dreams of the Gorkhas are my dreams too*”. This public meeting was organized to

drum up support for Mr. Aluwalia's candidature. He was not clear what dreams he was referring to. Let us give him the benefit of doubt and assume that he was not referring to the dream of a separate state. Let us assume that he meant the dreams of a brighter, richer and happier future which everyone wants.

Mr. Modi is just too busy putting India in the world map (it was never in the world map before he came to power as per the saffron brigade) to have time to look after our dreams but then Mr. Aluwalia, who fully benefited by this statement of Mr. Modi should have taken steps to fulfill the dreams of his leader. Has our MP done anything which has fulfilled any of the dreams that Mr.



PLEASE!!!! NO MORE

Modi saw and which were common to our dreams? Have the lives of the Gorkhas become any brighter, richer and happier than it was before Mr. Aluwalia won the MP seat from Darjeeling? Did Mr. Aluwalia do any such thing for his constituency which made the lives of people like you and me who stay here, any better? Did he facilitate any industry or business house to open up in his constituency which would provide local employment? Did he clear the way for a Central University in the Darjeeling Hills so that the students in his constituency could benefit? Has Mr. Aluwalia secured any quotas for Hill students in any reputed business or engineering or medical institute? Did Mr. Aluwalia do anything to bring any new health care institutions into the Hills? Has the central government, on his insistence, made any major infrastructural investments in the Hills of Darjeeling?

Well, I am a journalist and it is my job to keep track of such matters and to all the above questions, I have no positive answers. None of the above questions merit being ticked in the positive column.

Of course there isn't any iota of doubt that many organizations in the Darjeeling Hills have received funding for several of their projects through the MPLAD (Member of Parliament Local Area Development) Fund. It needs to be said here that although the MP has the full discretion over which project he or she wants to fund, the fact is that for the first three years of his tenure it was not our MP who decided who received what amount but rather it was decided by the bosses of the local party who had shepherded him to victory. But that is understandable considering the love for Gandhi that our local politicians have. Then again this is a nation-wide phenomenon and our local leaders are just helping maintaining the tradition.


Some credit must be given to Mr. Aluwalia though and it is a fact that he did act as a good PR man for the GJM in Delhi. He was very capable in arranging photo-ops for GJM leaders whenever they visited Delhi. The smiling/smug faces of the GJM leaders with the BJP top-brasses in Delhi, which appeared in the local newspapers, was all courtesy the appointment-fixing talent of our Member of Parliament. At least on this count, Mr. Aluwalia did his best and succeeded to a fair level.

There is a rule in Britain that an MP after being elected from a particular constituency must spend X number of days per year in the area he has been elected from. Having followed Mr. Aluwalia and having kept track of his visits to the Darjeeling/Kalimpong Hills ever since he was victorious from the Darjeeling Parliamentary constituency in the year 2014, I can say for a fact that he has spent not more than four weeks (closer to three weeks actually) in the Hills in the last four years. That is about 21 to 28 days in the last 1480 days. That means that in the last 4 years he spent less than 2% of his time in the place from where he was elected to Parliament. While we all understand that he was elected by us to represent us in Delhi, it would have served him better had he tried to spend more of his time in his constituency so that he could learn of the genuine problems and grievances of the public who voted him to power.

All this leads me to wonder if we really did make the right choice when we voted in 2014 Parliamentary elections. But then it isn't of much use crying over milk that has already been spilled. One can only hope we can learn from all our past experiences with "imported" MPs and vote a little more wisely in the next parliamentary elections. The experiment with "imported" MPs has proved an utter failure since the trend began with the elections of Mr. Inderjit Khullar in 1989.

I frankly do not have any issues personally with Mr. Aluwalia nor had any with Mr. Jaswant Singh or Mr. Inderjit Khullar. They were and are without any speck of doubt men with tall national standings and exemplary moral characters. My issues are with the failed experiments of having outsiders as our Member of Parliaments. Did Telangana or Chattisgarh or Uttarakhand even require outsiders to advocate their cases? No, they did not. We do have our own very capable people like Dr. Harka Bahadur Chettri or Dr. Mahendra P. Lama or P. Arjun or Amar Singh Rai or Amar Lama or even people like Neeraj Lama who could do a much better job of representing us in Parliament.

It is time our leaders realize that the khukri does not need to be backed up by the kripan or anything else to prove its cutting edge.

The Gorkha voice must be allowed the chance to mature into one which can be heard without a Khullar or a Singh having to supplement it. 

JHAHKRY IN DARJEELING

By Eagam Khaling

Jhahkry and Jhahkrism (Jhahkrivad) are found almost in every ethnic group in different places of the globe in various expressions and names though their essence is the same. The existence of spirits (both holy & evil) and deities is the central acceptance of the subject, which has culturally developed with the human civilization. The worship of natural forces, deities and belief in spirits live on since time immemorial though many call it as mere superstition and mysticism. It has its fair share of believers and non-believers. Today, science and technology has reached its zenith and as a consequence we are also living with uncountable complexities in almost all subjects and fields of human live. Thus, in this time of free trade, globalization and high technology the existence of such personality like Jhahkry and the practice of Jhahkrism, in the Nepali hill community of Darjeeling, may be a provocative research subject for students, scholars, researchers and intellectuals. There are so many questions related to the subject of Jhahkry which needs serious field (action) research and studies. Some of the commonly asked questions are: Who is a Jhahkry? Are they born or made? Can we call the knowledge of Jhahkry as Jhahkrism? How does a person becomes a Jhahkry? Do they have real healing power and how do we perceive that? How do people still believe them? What is the importance of Jhahkry in Nepalese society? What are the minimum supposed requirements to be a Jhahkry? These above questions are inter-related to each other. At the very outset, we must be able to understand the nature and subject matter of Jhahkry and without presuppositions of the role of spirits we cannot continue to the other details of Jhahkrism, for the maximum exploration of the subject. This short article is mainly written with the objective of drawing the attention of the scholars, researchers, students, writers and intellectuals on Jhahkrism and Jhahkries who are very much a reality in the hill society. They are deeply associated with our folk-culture. Thus, the study of cultural identity and literature of Nepalese and cultural relations amongst the hill communities cannot solely ignore the existence of Jhahkries and Jhahkrism, as hill peoples are naturally and culturally easy believers in spirits (evil and holy-spirits) and worship natural forces and deities.

‘Jhahkry’ according to **Nepali Brihat Sabda Kosh (Nepali Pajkeeya Pragya Prathisthan Publication)** is a healer who heals a sick person by chanting Tantra-mantra. The **Nepali-Nepali-English Dictionary** also defines it in a similar way. It says- a **‘Jhahkry’** means **‘Dhahmee’**, a person who chants Tantra-mantra, in Nepali, and **‘Wizard’** in English (Here, I have taken the word ‘Jhahkry’ for the translation ‘Jhahkree’ for the convenience of





non-Nepalese readers). This word **‘Wizard’** is not wholly acceptable, because this word has a different meaning in Nepali. **‘Jhahkry’** or **‘Dhahmee’** (Phedangba, Mangpa, Nokso, Bon and etc.) comfortably can be exchanged with the word **‘Witch-doctor’**. According to Longman Active Dictionary of English the word **‘Witch-doctor’** means a person in undeveloped society who is believed to have magical power. In the case of hill people this magical power indicatively seems to mean a healing power. These dictionary meanings are however comprehensively workable but not complete in itself. But generally and practically by the word **‘Jhahkry’** we refer to that person in our society who helps and heals people of their sickness and problems. The belief being that this sickness or problem is caused by some spirit. By the word **‘Jhahkry’** we also refer to that person who does a **‘Chimta’** (per formative worship) by beating his **‘Dhol-dhyangro’** (traditional drums especially used by Jhahkry) to bring deviated souls to the right path. A **‘Jhahkry’** also resorts to **‘Chimta’** to help a learner Jhahkry understand the finer details of Jhahkrism or to heal a sick person. This extra ordinary personality also foresees the causes of problems on grains of rice and diagnoses whether the problem is caused by spirits or is medical related. This method of diagnosing in the sense of Jhahkrism is called **‘Jokhana’**. The word **‘Jokhana’** also means guessing in the local language.

In the hills we can find sufficient number of people who consider Jhahkry’s Jokhana as superstitions but they cannot deny the existence of Jhahkry, because Jhahkries are before our eyes, with us and active member of our society and inseparably related to our culture. They are invited to perform and conduct worship in traditional worship gatherings, deities’ worships, and ancestors’ worships and even in some general worships (Puja). In this sense, Jhahkry has an active social involvement in the society and they are not isolatable from the context of Nepalese culture. If we do field research anywhere in the hills of Darjeeling, whether in urban centers or in the villages, we will definitely come across Jhahkries

and also find believers queuing up in front of a Jhahkry’s house or private temple, seeking his/her help. If we happen to ask them, they would tell us that they have come to do **‘Ke-Ke’** (a name given to healing worship performed by a Jhahkry) or to hear **‘Jokhana’**. The word **‘Ke-Ke’** cannot be exactly translated into English in its pure meaning and essence but the literal meaning of **‘Ke-Ke’** is **‘What-what’**. Any unexplainable thing that works upon the mind and body of a person consequently causing some problem is a matter considered fit for a Jhahkry’s intervention. For the non-believers, believing in anything which is unexplainable is simply superstition. They question the very concept of such belief. While their concerns and logic cannot be fully rejected the fact remains that the concept and existence of Jhahkries in our society, through time immemorable, cannot be denied and the belief in Jhahkrism cannot just be termed as superstition.

When a spirit (according to individual religion, dharma, tradition, race, culture and beliefs) or the spirit of ancestor chooses a particular body and soul to reside in, it remains within that body and soul till it desires to reside. The stay of spirit (the Deva) depends on the Jhahkry’s devotions (according to some Jhahkries’ interviews). This spirit is the hidden power, which makes a Jhahkry able to utter **‘Jokhana’** then do **‘Ke-Ke’** (healing). This spirit is also called **Atma, Dev, Kul-Devata** and etc. When this spirit enters into a person’s body and soul, the person begins to behave abnormally and starts to do

many unusual activities like crying, shouting, screaming, glooming, murmuring chanting and trembling, which are commonly believed to be a birth symptoms of a Jhahkry but whether or not the person will actually become a Jhahkry later can be predicted only by a mature (expert) Jhahkry. Birth age of Jhahkry is not fixed but generally older aged persons do not become new Jhahkrys. There have been some Jhahkries who are believed to be trembling ever since they were in their mother's womb. One cannot become a Jhahkry by choice. It depends on the spirit's preference and choice. If it was by choice of an individual then probably many training institutes for churning out Jhahkries would have been in existence by now. Once a spirit chooses a person, that particular person has to live according to the directions of the spirit till he/she becomes a complete Jhahkry otherwise the individual suffers immensely. At this stage the person has to find a compatible and mature *Guru* (teacher-jhahkry) for learning the necessary knowledge, methods and Tantra-mantras related to Jhahkrism. The guru declares his/her disciple Jhahkry as a complete Jhahkry only after the trainee has gathered sufficient knowledge from the Guru and has passes certain tests (conducted by the guru).



Human beings are still unable to completely understand the universe and human life. We human beings are incomplete in knowledge though we have learnt much with the passage of time. The subject of Jhahkrism is related to our culture, day to day living and with myth, folk-culture and belief, and a Jhahkry can be considered as an important personality of Nepalese society in the hills. A Jhahkry's main objective is to spiritually heal or help people in the society. His/her devotions towards the hidden power of spirits (Atma, Kul-Devta and Devi-Devatas) and unshakable belief in them, expresses the existence of spirits (all spirits) and most importantly manifests the immortality of the soul and presupposition of God.

It has to be understood that Jhahkrism is not a pure science subject; only our methods of study and perspective may be scientific. Jhahkrism is a socio-cultural and anthropological subject and metaphysical in nature. It has been spiritually related to the reality and historically with the development of socio-cultural construction. The word '**Jhahkrism**' is quite obscure because epistemologically Jhahkry-knowledge cannot be transferable to every person, that is due to the place of spirit and extra mental intuition (i.e. epistemological and linguistic approaches are to be avoided). If anything is '**ism**' in itself then it must be solely transferable to every person, and its instances and contents must be explicit to every person's understanding. This is one reason why many consider it as mysticism and superstition.

The Jhahkry culture is also found in many Nepalese sub-castes (where Jhahkry is also called by some other names like **Mangpa, Nokso, Bon, Dhamee, Phedangba** and **Bijuva**, etc.) and among them **kirati culture** is also one. Some scholars are of the opinions that Kirati language is also a branch of Sanskrit language, which in course of time could not develop into a proper language and as a result we do not find any concrete literature in this language. There is also a problem with the history of Jhahkry. We do not know the exact date of the birth of Jhahkrism. Some say it was the mythological God '**Shiva**' while others say it was '**Sukracharya**' the guru of '**Danavas**' who started Jhahkrism.

The concept of Jhahkrism has come along with human existence and civilization, and till today it thrives with us in the hill community of Darjeeling. This is inseparably related to our culture, social lives and ways of living. ■



Swapan Sen

THE TEESTA FLOOD 1968 A REAL LIFE STORY

The Teesta Floods of 1968 were the worst ever seen in this part of the world and a disaster of the same magnitude today would spell doom for thousands of people who now live alongside the river.

By Mr Swapan Sen

<http://akdcts.blogspot.com>

It was the 2nd of October, 1968. This being Gandhiji's birthday it was a holiday for all but not for me. My colleague Dipankar Chakraborty, who was the Assistant Engineer of the Moinaguri Subdivision of the Irrigation & Waterways Directorate's Jalpaiguri Division, had gone on leave and I was to look after his work in addition to my own at Jalpaiguri. Rain was pouring down incessantly from the previous evening and at about 8 AM that day, I received a telephone call from our Executive Engineer, Kamakshya Prasad Chowdhury (Kamakshyada to all his junior colleagues) asking me to go to Moinaguri and take a look at the Domohani embankment. So I was on my way to Moinaguri in my Jeep not knowing what to expect.

Reaching our office at Moinaguri, I called for Sri Monoranjan Adhikary, the senior-most and the most experienced Sub-Assistant Engineer of the Sub-division. Together we set out for an inspection of the Domohani embankment which was crossing the

Railway Bridge on the Teesta. I had little experience with the behavior of the mighty Teesta. So at the Domohani gauge-site, the spectacle seemed quite frightening. The river water was nearly touching the danger-mark and the river seemed to be endless between the two embankments of Jalpaiguri and Moinaguri. The country-side slope of the Domohani embankment, protecting Moinaguri, had slipped away at places. But these slippages were visibly old. Mr. Adhikary and I called up local men for covering the countryside slopes with gunny bags filled with earth with the hope that this would slow down the seepage of river-water through the embankment soil and prevent further slippage.

The water level of the river kept on rising and towards the evening it went beyond the danger-mark. As dusk set in, it became practically impossible to do any fruitful work amidst incessant rains and darkness. I decided to stay on at Moinaguri and went back to the

office. I rang up Kamakshyada and narrated what I had seen at the embankment-site and the fact that it was impossible to work with a handful of local men during the night and continuing heavy rains. Sensing fear in my voice, he told me not to panic, as the embankments, as experienced by him, are never breached by mere seepage unless the river-water itself flows over the top of the embankment.

I spent a very restless night in Dipankar's living quarters. In the morning, I set out again with Mr. Adhikary, for the embankment. As I reached the embankment, what I saw was simply chilling. The river water had crossed the extreme danger level and there appeared to be, as we had been taught at our Engineering College, "sand-boiling" along the toe-line of the embankment on the country-side. Seeping across the embankment, the river-water was coming out with sand taken from the embankment along the toe-line through numerous holes. The sand coming out appeared to boil in the river water at the exits. It looked as if there were numerous pipes in the embankment through which the river-water was finding way to the other side. Evidently, if allowed to continue, this would eventually cause sinking of the crest of the embankment. We gathered the village people available nearby and sought their help in covering the embankment toe with gunny bags filled with earth taken from wherever this was available. Soon other problems surfaced. There were large-scale slippages on the country-side slope of the embankment and the top of the embankment, as apprehended, started sinking at places. As our brave men kept on collecting and depositing earth in their bid to repair the damages, I went down to the village and managed to phone



Kamakshyada from the phone of a log-yard owner. He told me, he would try to come to the site but the condition of the protection embankment on the Jalpaiguri-side too was no better and he and other colleagues of mine were busy in protecting that embankment. He also told me to keep in touch with Utpal Bhadra, the Assistant engineer at the Head Office, who had been deputed by him especially to monitor the situation, maintain liaison with the District Administration and the Army for help.

It was clearly a losing battle we were fighting. We neither had the manpower, nor enough usable earth or sand nearby to cover the leaking toes and depressions of the crest of the embankment, that had started appearing in the upstream reaches of the embankment. The top of the embankment had also narrowed down in places due to slippages and it was hardly possible to access the upper reaches of the embankment in our Jeep any more. The rains were not also showing any signs of letting up. I conveyed to Utpal from the log-yard owner's phone that we had to somehow save the people as a breach in the embankment seemed imminent. He said the Army has been asked to help and I should remain at the site till they arrive.

At about 12 noon, Government Officials, including the Sub-Divisional Officer,

Water-level of Teesta at Teesta Bazar seen from across the river on the 3rd of October 1968

Jalpaiguri, arrived on the spot to ascertain the situation. Asked what I thought about the condition of the embankment, I told them that the prognosis was bad as the water was still rising and the embankment could give way; the people in nearby villages should therefore, be alerted and evacuated. I made the same request to a local political leader, Mr. Chikur Chanda, who had also arrived at the spot around the same time. I told him the village folks were not ready to leave their homes in the incessant rain and that they were to be convinced.

At about 3PM, the rise in the water-level seemed to slow down and the water-level, apparently reached a peak. This brought some solace to our anxious minds but little did we know what was lying in wait. With the dusk setting in, we had to return to our office. I was in rain-soaked clothes throughout the day and needed a change of clothes. I slipped into my night cloths, which was the

only dry apparel then available with me. Mr. Adhikari too, went home for a change of clothes but came back to the office in an hour's time. Just then, a radiogram message arrived from Teesta Bazaar and we learnt that the level of water at the Teesta Bazaar (Anderson Bridge) gauge site was rising rapidly, more than



6 inches in 30 minutes. The status reported was that of about 6 PM. We consulted our gauge-records and previous history of time taken by the river-water to reach Domohani from the Teesta Bazar. What we found, took our breath away. The water level at Teesta Bazaar had reached an all-time unbelievably high peak (20.4 m above the extreme danger level*). The time the river water takes to reach Domohani from the Teesta Bazaar gauge site, we found, was 6 to 8 hours. This meant the water level at the Domohani gauge site would reach its peak between 12-00 hours that night and 2 AM, the next morning.

We set out again for the embankment. As we reached the gauge-site of the embankment at about 12-00 hours, we found that the water level was just about a foot below the top of the embankment. It was dangerous to proceed further upstream along the embankment in our Jeep. To reach the log-yard owner's place we had to pass below a Banyan tree, which had, by that time, started leaning on the embankment partially blocking our path. We managed to reach the log-yard in the village along the side-road leading off from the embankment. I could call up Utpal over the log-yard phone and he told me to stick to the site as the army was to arrive to take charge of the embankment. Before I left, I told the owner of the log-yard to call up his neighbors and move to safe zones as quickly as possible. Apparently he was unwilling to leave his home and said he had no place to go amidst such incessant rain.

I had no alternative but to go back to the gauge-site and wait for the army to arrive. This was a relatively safer zone as the gauge-site was close to the crossing of the railway embankment and our protection embankment and this crossing was at a level several feet higher than the top of the embankment. On the way to this crossing I summoned my gauge-readers

from their camp, rigged-up on a wooden-platform, by flashing the headlights of my Jeep and told them to be alert and stick close to the water-gauge and the Railway line. We turned our Jeep focusing the headlights on the water-gauge, very little of which was sticking out above the river water by then. We kept on waiting in our Jeep and trying to read the water-gauge with the Jeep's

headlight from time to time.

It was at about 2 AM that we realized that the gauge-stick was no longer visible. The top of the stick had apparently disappeared below the river-water and this meant that the river was flowing over the top of the embankment. The gauge-readers were nowhere in sight. I was worried that the camp of the gauge-readers would be washed away as soon as the embankment was breached. The men in the camp needed to be saved. Mr. Adhikary, got down from the Jeep and went in search of the gauge-readers. The tall figure vanished from the path of the Jeep-headlights as the brave man walked away towards the camp along the embankment. Minutes went by seeming like hours, but he did not come back. At last when I had given up hopes of seeing him alive again, a staggering figure emerged from the darkness. It was Mr. Adhikary. He came up to me, uttered, "I am sorry, Sir, I could not reach the camp. I fell into the river", and then dropped on the ground apparently losing his senses. My driver, Kanu Mali and I jumped down from the Jeep and hoisted the heavy man on to the back seat of the Jeep. I told Kanu to turn the Jeep in the direction of the gauge-reader's camp and flash its headlights. After several minutes, that seemed like ages, two figures appeared before the headlights of the Jeep - the gauge-readers. As I asked for the Gauge-register, they said they had not brought the record-book. Mr. Adhikari had, in the meantime regained his senses, and shouted at the gauge-readers urging them to go back and fetch the Register from their camp. The gauge-readers were obviously afraid of losing their lives, as the river-water was flowing over the embankment, but ultimately went back to their camp and fetched the gauge-register. As they arrived with the Register, Mr. Adhikary snatched it away from them, embraced it as if this was his life, and kept on hysterically crying out, "Now everyone will believe us. This will prove that the Teesta has gone over the top of the embankment".

I told Kanu to take me to Jalpaiguri, so that I could be with Kamakshyada and other colleagues. I asked the gauge-

readers to board the Jeep and together we started for Jalpaiguri, across the road bridge on the other side of the river. As we entered the town of Jalpaiguri, we found that the streets were all water-logged, - possibly inundated by the waters of the overflowing rivulet Karala which meanders through the town and meets the Teesta finally. Further inside the town, the water-level went on steadily increasing. As we reached



the police station at the center of the town, Kanu, our driver, declared that the car-engine would stall if we proceeded further towards the Executive Engineer's bungalow. I told him to drop me at the Police Station so that they could, if possible, go back home at Moinaguri. They left assuring me that they would not take any undue risk to reach their homes. I found a policeman talking over a phone. I snatched the receiver from him after disclosing my identity and managed to connect Kamakshyada. He asked me to come to his place immediately. I was in no shape to make the half mile journey to his residence alone. I was then running a high temperature and told him I could not come to his place. He told me to stick to the Police Station, where he would send some men to fetch me. I found an empty table, climbed up and lay down on the table. A few minutes later, the lights of the township went out. I was not also able to use the telephone thereafter as apparently, all the telephone lines too, went dead.

I had lost all sense of time lying on the table, when someone shook me up awake and urged me to come down. I found it was two of our office-clerks, who had been sent down to fetch me from the Police Station. We waded through the waist-deep rapids then flowing through the town and after about 20 minutes reached Kamakshyada's house. I was terribly excited and told him what I had been through and that the Teesta waters had breached the Domohani embankments. He said the Jalpaiguri embankments had also been likewise overtopped and told me to take rest and not to think about what has happened. I lay down on a bed and woke up in the morning only to hear someone weeping. It was Kamakshyada. He was looking out of the windows of his first floor and was watching helplessly carcasses of animals, trees and debris floating by. By then fifty-five people from the Colony of the Irrigation Department's Division Office had taken shelter in the first

floor of Kamakshyada's house, the ground floor having already gone under water. The water available in the overhead tanks of the house was insufficient for the people who had taken shelter. This was therefore required to be saved for drinking purposes only. The water level outside kept on rising till about 11 AM and at 4PM, this receded only by a couple

of inches. It was evident we were all going to face serious crisis if the water level did not recede faster.

It was 6th of October, 1968, 3 PM, when help arrived. Mr. Kutty, the Executive Engineer from Siliguri Division, arrived with his men, water, rice and other essentials wading through near waist-deep water and sludge. To us he seemed like God. He assured that all help will be available from his men and we were not to worry any more.

Yes, we got a fresh lease of life but the townsfolk had by then suffered irreparable and inconsolable loss. Their sufferings would continue for many more months and for some, for many more years. After a few days I was able to reach my residential quarters, pack up a few things and leave for Kolkata where my parents were anxiously waiting for me.

Epilogue:

The Domohani Gauge-register, that was saved, was unfortunately not available after the flood. My colleague Dipankar Chakraborty, who retired as the Chief Engineer of the Irrigation Department of the West Bengal Government, tells me he did not see this after he was called back from leave and took over charge of the Moinaguri Sub-division again. He says all documents in his office were destroyed by the flood water.

Kamakshyada, my Executive Engineer, is no more. What he told me from his experience that the Teesta embankment would be breached only if the river water flowed over the top, proved to be true.

I do not know if Mr. Adhikary, the braveheart, is still alive. The official records of the river-water levels at the Domohani gauge station will not be available any more to prove him right. ■



J S Simick



THE PRICE OF FISH *Maacha ko Mol*

Maacha ko Mol a short story by the celebrated Nepali writer Shiv Kumar Rai

English translation by J S Simick

The furious rainstorm had just stopped. The playful south wind had torn the white clouds. Through the gaps in the clouds could be seen the blue freshly drenched sky. Peace reigned now. Even Nature calms down after a bout of madness. Small streams gurgled. The roar of rivulets echoed along the crevasses into which the waters had entered.

Raney Majhi came out of his small shelter. Putting his right hand over his eyebrows, he scanned the sky and the raging river. He was short and stout. He wore an old black daura, a double breasted upper garment - and black suruwal, a pyjama like trouser. The garments made of jean cloth, had undergone multiple patch repairs. With a black striped waist coat lined by white buttons, an ash coloured faded topi, and suruwal folded upto his calves Raney was a colourful person.

The observant eyes of Raney must have seen something in the rumbling river. He made his way with a small fishing net towards the river. He stood on a slippery moss laden stone. He saw that his big fish-trap made of bamboo net was intact, but the flood had swept away the other one at the meeting place of the two rivers. He sighed with grief. He

nimbly jumped over the stones and skipped further downstream. The water in the whirlpool pond had risen. Froth was being churned around the stones. Raney cast the net once. Stones, sand, weeds and about ten fishes landed in the net.

TWO

This was the life of Raney. His father had also been a fisherman. About ten years back he had been swept away in the flood of the rainy season. The memories now seemed to be fading.

People are afraid of ghosts. They say do not walk at night : you might meet churail, female spirit, or sindy and sindi, river ghosts. But for Raney such talk was nonsense. He himself was almost a ghost. In the quiet of the night, when people were fast asleep Raney defied darkness with his flaming torch, made of kerosene and rags. In the restless flame of his torch, his weather burnt face looked fearsome. He searched for fishes under the stones. He roamed the rivulets and hills and streams. Perhaps a cold shiver of fear touched the spirits of the river on seeing this lone phantom roaming the night.

Raney turned and cast the net again. The panicky fishes entered the net. Lines of joy formed in the weather beaten face of Raney. His eyes glittered. He started piercing his catch with a cut bamboo strip and making a garland of the fishes.

A momentary childhood scene came up suddenly. In his toddler's tone he had asked his father to allow him to catch fish. His father, rather affectionately, had called his mother and asked her to take care of the little child. Coming home after selling fish his mother would smilingly offer his father tea mixed with black pepper. This was his experience of the joy of a home. The thought of a life partner and homelife crossed his mind.

THREE

Putting the fishes in a bamboo stem Raney went to the market. His limbs were wet up to the knees. The river



A momentary childhood scene came up suddenly. In his toddler's tone he had asked his father to allow him to catch fish. His father, rather affectionately, had called his mother and asked her to take care of the little child. Coming home after selling fish his mother would smilingly offer his father tea mixed with black pepper. This was his experience of the joy of a home. The thought of a life partner and homelife crossed his mind.

stones had made blue bruises in his feet, and there were also abrasions which bled.

“Brother, what is the price of the fish?”, one man asked.

“Eight annas for one seer”, replied Raney

“Such a price for stream fish?”

“This price is nothing compared to the hard work involved”.

Raney knew that his price was much too less, but then he did not know the exact market price.

By five o'clock in the evening Raney had sold all the fishes. He counted the money. It was all of ten mohurs. He felt elated. With such sale he could earn one hundred and fifty company silver coins in one month. Within two months he could have a hut and bring home a wife! Hope swelled within him.

Thinking of these things Raney saw a new shop in the roadside. One woman aged between twenty-five

and thirty was standing in the doorway. Although past the flame of youth, attractiveness surrounded her.

“Oh fisherman dai, come to our shop sometimes and have tea!”

For young Raney this was a chance for some flirting. “Sure I'll come. What do you have? Bring it.”

The lady gave him sel roti, potato curry, and tea.

“You want fish also?”

The fish was fried in red masala and looked inviting. “How much?”

“Two annas per piece.”

“So much for a piece of fish?” Raney was surprised.

“This same fish is sold in the hotel for eight annas. So it is cheap here.”

Raney said, “Yes, the price of fish should indeed be more.”

These two experts who dealt with fish daily were yet to know the actual value of fish.

Raney thought again about a life partner and a hut beside the river. He suddenly asked the woman “Where is your husband?”

The woman said quite simply, “My husband is dead. My father-in-law is nice. But my mother-in-law cannot stand me. That’s why I’ve left them and come here.”

Hearing this Raney’s hopes for the future took a leap. She is a widow, but she’s young. She will love me. Now I will have to build a shelter and earn money.

When Raney was leaving, the woman said “Daju keep on coming okay?”

Unexpectedly she added “If death does not come, and fate favours we will keep on meeting!”.

Raney was astonished!

FOUR

It was seven o’clock when he reached the stream. Today he was full of energy. There was joy in his heart. His young soul was excited. It was a dark cloudy night of the rainy season. Lightning struck and the sound echoed across the mountains. Raney took a flaming torch and went towards the river. Lightning struck again putting a bit of fear into his otherwise brave heart. In the brief light of the lightning he saw a glimpse of his father’s face. The lightning seemed to say “Don’t enter the river.”

Raney wanted to earn double the amount he earned today. His hopes and dreams urged him on. He was adamant in his determination to catch fish.

Raney went to the whirlpool pond and cast his net. The light of the torch stunned the fishes. Twenty five to thirty fishes, katley, asala, buduna were caught in



It was the end of everything. The whirlpool had given Raney his hopes and dreams. It took these back. It gave him death instead.

There was silence. The fishing net was buried in the sand. Only the last flickering flames of the torch seemed to be waiting for Raney. A cool wind blew from between the mountains and seemed to say “This is the price of fish”.

The river rippled as before.

The order of Nature continued, undisturbed.

the net. There were fishes and fishes in every shelter beneath the stones. Numerous fishes had also entered the small and big fish-traps. Hunger and sleep left Raney. He forgot his body. Only his future mattered.

From the west, black clouds appeared. A flash flood started with an ominous roar from the hill tops. How would Raney know that Yamraj was coming along with the mad waters?

The fishes which were collected and gathered on the riverbank were swept away by the sudden flood. Raney was aghast to see his huge catch being swept away.

He did not realize he was also being swept away. He exclaimed “such a huge price for fish!....”. He drowned before completing his sentence.

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DR. RICHARD KEITH SPRIGG

A BELATED TRIBUTE TO ONE OF THE GREATEST SCHOLARS KALIMPONG HAS EVER HAD

Heleen Plaisier

With the death of Richard Keith Sprigg on September 8, 2011, the Himalayan scholarly community has to say farewell to this pioneering intellectual, who was a generous mentor and engaging friend to many of us. Keith Sprigg remains well known for his important contributions to Tibetan, Lepcha, Limbu, Burmese and other languages, as well as for his Firthian approach to phonology, applied to the field of comparative Tibeto-Burman linguistics.

Keith Sprigg was born in Melton Mowbray in the United Kingdom on March 31, 1922 and completed his first academic degree in Cambridge, where he received a First Class Honours in the Classical Tripos in 1942. He joined the Royal Air Force during the Second World War and between 1943 and 1947 he served in the UK, India, Ceylon, Singapore and Japan.

During this eventful period, he managed to pursue his linguistic studies and obtained War Degrees, a B.A. in 1944 and an M.A. in 1947.

In 1948, Keith started working at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London as a Lecturer in Phonetics. He studied Tibetan in Kalimpong and Gyantse, during visits in 1949 and 1950, during which



Dr. Sprigg presents a paper to the Tenth Annual Conference of the Linguistic Society of Nepal at Kirtipur in November 1989 (Photo Contributed by Mr. Bharat Mani Pradhan)

time he was mentored by David Macdonald. This visit not only kindled a long-lasting interest in both Tibetan and Lepcha, but in Kalimpong Keith also met his future wife, Ray Margaret Williams, a great-granddaughter of David Macdonald. Keith and Ray married in 1952 in Melton Mowbray.

During 1951 and 1952, the Lepcha scholar Karphoo Tamsang from Kalimpong worked with Keith on the Lepcha language at SOAS. In 1955-6, Keith and Ray went on an expedition to Nepal to do fieldwork for six months. The country had not been open to foreign visitors for long when they travelled from eastern Nepal to Kathmandu, which made for an interesting and impressive journey. Keith was able to collect abundant material on the languages he had become interested in, such as Limbu, Newar, Bantawa, Sherpa and Tamang.

Following this long fieldtrip, Ray and Keith had two children: David, born in 1957, and Maya, born in 1958. Keith continued to work at SOAS, and the first fieldtrip would be

followed by many others, to Sikkim, Pakistan and India. He completed a Ph.D. in the 'Phonetics and Phonology of Tibetan (Lhasa dialect)', and was promoted to Reader in Phonetics at SOAS in 1968.

After Ray suffered a stroke on New Year's Eve of 1975, she remained partially paralysed and her health was fragile. In 1980, Keith took early retirement and he and Ray settled

in Kalimpong. There, Dr Sprigg became something of an institution. He was much liked by the local residents, to whom he would often address an elaborate greeting in their native language, which left some of them dazzled even after many years of him doing so. Many scholarly guests from all over the world came to seek his advice and guidance, or simply to enjoy his and his wife's delightful company. Those who did not know Keith Sprigg personally in Kalimpong recall the sound of his bagpipes, which travelled far in the hills and was familiar to many.

In 1982 he was awarded a Litt.D. by the University of Cambridge, and on his 65th birthday a Festschrift was presented to him (D. Bradley, M. Mazaudon and E.J.A. Henderson, eds, 1988, *Prosodic Analysis and Asian Linguistics to honour R.K. Sprigg*, Pacific Linguistics). A bibliography of his work up to 1987 can be found in this Festschrift. For his work on Lepcha language, culture and history, Keith was awarded the K.P. Tamsang Lepcha Language and Literary Award in 1996. In 1997 he was made a life member of the Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association, which refers to him as 'a champion of the Lepchas'.



Dr. Sprigg playing a bagpipe, in true Scottish tradition.

This picture is courtesy Mr. Markus Viehbeck of Heidelberg University, Germany

When Ray died in 1999, Keith returned to the UK and initially stayed with his children. He later remarried and lived in Crowborough, Sussex, with his second wife, Elizabeth. In his later years, Keith was struck by macular degeneration, but although his eyesight slowly deteriorated, he kept working and completed a dictionary of Balti, which was published in 2002 (RK Sprigg, *Balti-English English-Balti Dictionary*, London: Routledge Curzon). Elizabeth and Keith enjoyed travelling and visited several conferences together. Keith kept in touch with the academic world and his colleagues and former students until his health started giving away. During the last year of his life, Keith was not in good health and his eyesight was very poor. He was lovingly nursed by his wife at home.

Those of us who have had the privilege of knowing this remarkable man may recall that

Keith appreciated saying a cheerful goodbye, along the lines of 'Happy we have met, happy we have been, happily we part and happy we shall meet again.' We remember his intellectual sharpness, his generosity and his unfailing sense of humour. Keith Sprigg will be dearly missed by many. 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS OF LOVE LETTERS

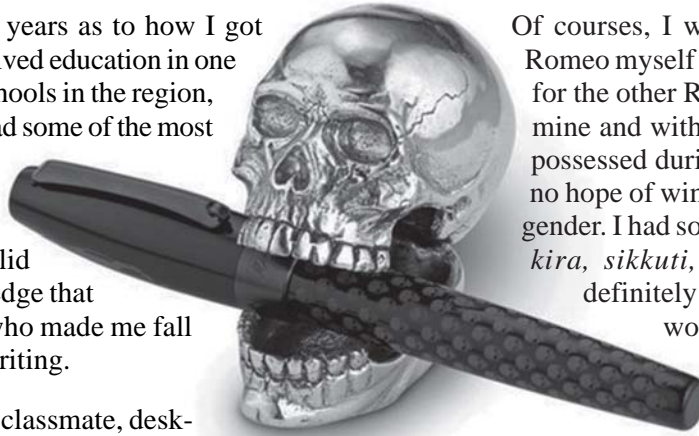
By Sandip C Jain

Many have asked me over the years as to how I got initiated into writing. Yes, I received education in one of the finest English medium schools in the region, St. Augustine's School, which had some of the most wonderful teachers. The lessons in English that Mr. A.T.Dasgupta, Father Felix and others, of course, gave me a solid foundation but I must acknowledge that I had two very unlikely gurus who made me fall in love, head over heels, with writing.

My first guru of course was my classmate, desk-mate and khaini-mate- the indomitable curly haired Sanat Gupta. Although looked like a miniature version of Gabbar Singh, complete with dark complexion, curly hair and tobacco filled lower lip, his command over the English left us all in awe. But then rather than being armed with guns he always carried along something more powerful-Books. It was he who initiated me into reading- by the time I finished Class 10 I had completed reading the entire collect of books by writers like Sidney Sheldon, Jeffery Archer, Jack Higgins, Ken Follett, Robert Ludlum and of course James Hadley Chase. I cannot forget to credit Commando or Tintin or Archie and Asterix comics for broadening my English vocabulary. Of course in later years my reading appetite increased to such an extreme level that my wife now often refers to herself as my second wife- she says my first wife are my books. But then it is my second Guru which is actually the subject of this article.

My second guru is the one which actually got me hooked to writing and she is named, LOVE LETTERS!! Yes, writing love letters in school initiated me into writing and made me realize the powers of a well constructed sentence. I realized it could make or break many a dreams or lives. Several months of romance could be finished off in a flash with one poorly constructed love letter or many days of cat and mouse games could end up in a romantic liaison with the help of a flowery love letter.

Writing love letter was an art form in those pre Facebook and Whatsapp days. Those who excelled in this art generally walked away with the trophy, to the envy of his competitors. There were some acknowledged experts in every school who excelled in this fine art. Their services were much in demand and the better ones almost had celebrity status amongst all budding Romeos in School. I was one of them in St. Augustine's School during my senior school days.



Of courses, I would have preferred to be the Romeo myself rather than be the "letter writer" for the other Romeos but then with a face like mine and with the skeleton like body frame I possessed during those days, I had absolutely no hope of winning over anyone of the female gender. I had some wonderful nick names- *kath kira, sikkuti, murkhutta and lamkhuttay*- definitely not very heroic names which would win over any St. Joseph's Convent girl. Who would wanted to be known as *Kathkira* ko girlfriend after all.

Like I said, writing love letters was a fine art form- many things had to be considered. It had to be considered if the girl would hand over the letter to her school Principal or not; it had to be considered if she already had a boyfriend. Whether she had a tough looking brother had to be found out and it also had to be ascertained who were her friends. Finding out about her friends was most important so as to be sure that the person sending the love letter hadn't previously sent her friend a similar proposal. Whether the girl had long hair or short hair and whether she was tall or short had to be noted so that adequate words could be found to praise her attributes.

I cannot take names, you may call it professional ethics, but when I look back at some of the love letters I wrote then, I still choke with laughter. I recall a few; one was for a girl from St. Joseph's Convent by a classmate of mine. After three days of momos and alu-chops and chini-pops, which I received as bribe to write that letter, I wrote a letter which included the line, "I have a disease and its only cure is you". It was carefully copied down by the Romeo in his own handwriting and dispatched through a Postman, not before spraying the letter paper with Old Spice perfume stolen from his father's bathroom cabinet- the postman was always a junior student who had to be pampered and protected. After several days of restlessness and sleeplessness came the reply. I still remember a fattish envelope being delivered to him. He opened it as quickly as he could and out came his original letter, torn to a hundred pieces, and it was accompanied by a chit which read "MADNESS IS A DISEASE CURED IN MENTAL ASYLUMS, NOT BY LOVE"...

The tail piece is that the two now have been married for 21 years and the sum total of his disease and the medicine she administered has produced three little cures... 🐼



IMAGE & DETAILS BY BHANU BARAL

Pioneering members of the then Nepali Sahitya Samity (Later Nepali Sahitya Adhyayan Samity) who performed the spade work for the setting up of the Samity like a wiseman's house on rocks. The group raised funds for the publication of 'Sanket' (now Sahitya Sanket) through 'Deusi khelai' in 1965, the year the Samity, came unto existence. Now they are unsung, unlamented and forgotten heroes.

Front (sitting) - Late Mr. Lama, (Urgen lama/ Mini's father), Late Mr. B. B Lamichaney.

Sitting (2nd row) - Late Mr. P. L Subba (Dsp - 3rd), Late RaiSaheb M. k. Pradhan, Late Mr. Dhanraj Baral (My Father), Late Mr. D. S Ghataraj (Father-in-law of Udit Narayan (Bollywood)

3rd Row - Late Mr. Gajendra Bhandari, Mr. Late R. N. Dahal.

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A LETTER WHICH CREATED HISTORY

Date: 02 - 07 - 1909

Divisional Railway Officer,
Sahibgunj,

Respected Sirs,

I am arrive by passenger train Ahmedpur station and my belly is too much swelling with jackfruit. I am therefore went to privy. Just I doing the nuisance that guard making whistle blow or train to go off and I am running with lotaah in one hand and dhoti in the next when I am fall over and expose all my shocking to man and female women on platform. I am got leaved at Ahmedpur station. This too much bad, if passenger go to make dung that dam guard not wait train five minutes for him. I am therefore pray your honour to make big fine on that guard for public sake. Otherwise I am making big report to papers.

(ORIGINAL LETTER)

Your faithful Servant,

Okhil Chandra Sen

Okhil Babu wrote this letter to the Sahibganj divisional railway officer in 1909. It is on display at the Railway Museum in New Delhi. It was also reproduced under the caption Travellers Tales in the Far Eastern Economic Review.

Any guesses why this letter is of Historic Value?

It led to the introduction of TOILETS in trains in India...!!!!

So no idea is stupid and

Always speak up...

Howsoever bad or good you may be at any language)...



D.T.TAMLONG

AND HIS PUBLISHED WORKS

A REVIEW— BY DR. DICK DEWAN

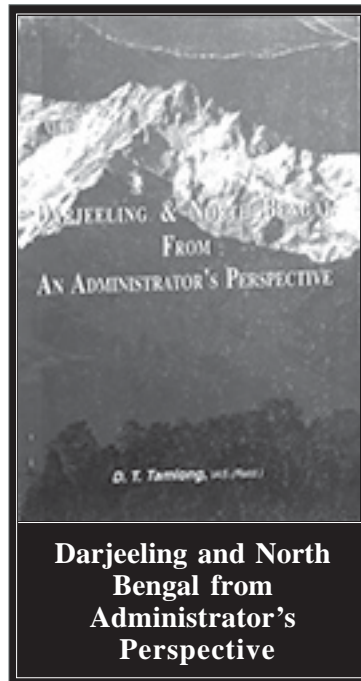
A man born and brought up in Kashyong, a village adjacent to Pedong, attended his primary and secondary course of studies in St. George's School at Pedong, completing it in 1961 in flying colours. He joined Darjeeling Government College in pursuit of higher studies. He completed his PUC (Pre-University Course) in 1962 and B.Sc. in 1965. On completing his B.Sc he joined as a teacher in his own alma mater. He left teaching in 1968 to join in the government service as a Revenue officer.

He qualified in his WBCS (Exe.) Exam in the year 1970 in Group 'A' service and obtained his most coveted appointment in 1972 to end up finally as an IAS inducted officer from the Darjeeling Hills. This was an outstanding achievement for a Hillman hailing from sylvan ambience but nurturing his solemn ambition of excellent feat. Since the school-days he had a passion for reading story books and novels borrowing from libraries and elsewhere. A humble product of an Anglo-vernacular institution, he, relying mostly on his self efforts gained his skills of good spoken and written English, much to our bewilderment. Being his close junior companions we were sure from an early age that he would bring all of us much pride and honour.

A man of simple disposition and a credible integrity by virtue of his ancestry he would always talk in a plain language and in a straightforward manner. It was his tenacious reading habit which helped him become a proven writer with impeccable English. Since released from harness (retirement) he lost no time in starting to write and has somehow managed to get many of his works published. He has by now authored four valuable books banking basically on factual matters of his experience gained as a hardcore bureaucrat. He has keenly witnessed the entire functioning of the governmental machinery, observing and discharging diligently his bounden duties with utmost concern. What is so interesting about his writings is that they are all refreshingly straightforward narrations of unreserved facts. There isn't any over-saying of the happenings, events or incidents, all related to his incumbency period. It seems he

maintained a regular diary which helped him transmit to us such valuable information. After all, uprightness was the hallmark of his virtues as his cronies would gleefully insinuate for some intimacy.

All his books have been essentially informative for us laymen revealing the confidential operation of administrative functioning, about which otherwise, we the general masses would ever be left in the lurch. Thanks to him that we were enlightened to the utmost extent possible. Lest we should go oblivious of Mr. Tamlong's offer of his creative works we may just care to enlist them below for our fondly caressing them. They are so finely readable and comprehensible within anybody's capacity. Research scholars working on the affairs of Darjeeling Hill-region may very well find them useful and informative as authentic sources for some valuable references:

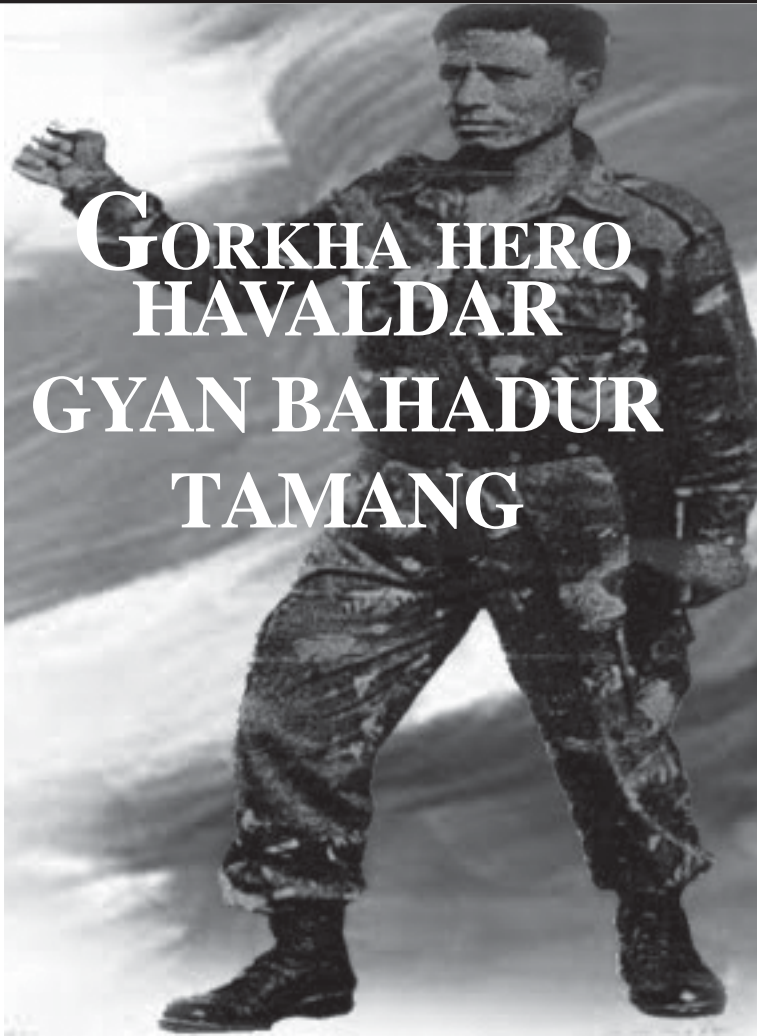


1. Darjeeling and North Bengal from Administrator's Perspective
Pub Sept 2006, Rs. 180/- pp. 166+
2. Darjeeling Diaries
Pub Sept 2012, Rs. 250/- pp 212+
3. Quiet Flows the Teesta
Pub Jan 2018, Rs. 250/- pp 183+
4. Mayel Lyang and the Lepchas

Pub 2008

All these books so far brought out into light as Mr. Tamlong's original creations are not to be missed by the general readers. His has been a real great contribution towards the enlightenment and enrichment of the hill people catering to their intelligence quotient. We have been made so familiar with the official parlance, official procedure, process of file-system, official inspection, official visit, all intended for the public service and the redressal of public grievances. His writings are related mostly to the causes of public need, public demand and public or civil services embodying confidential matters to impart by way of candid conversation rather unreservedly. He is talking to us with inklings as if to keep us well-informed regarding how a responsible and accountable civil servant should act for the public benefit at large in these days of Welfare State, when the question of well-being of the mass stands pre-eminent.

Colleagues of his teaching days laud him for being a successful administrator and an accomplished writer now. As they say, his sober nature wasn't compatible to his dabbling into politics. Let us say once more that he has been so free and frank to share his precious experiences with us all. 📖



Soon dense fog enveloped the area. Taking advantage of poor visibility, **Gyan Bahadur Tamang** made good his escape to rejoin the battalion. Bleeding profusely, low on ammunition, his rifle severely damaged, thirsty and hungry, he tore his vest and tied it around his neck to reduce the loss of blood. He wandered around in the fog till he fell asleep exhausted. The next morning, he woke up with a start startling two Pakistani soldiers who quickly turned on him and asked him to surrender at gunpoint. Displaying remarkable presence of mind, he employed the oldest ruse in the world by yelling and waving at an imaginary point behind the Pakistanis. As they turned around, he pulled out his khukri and slit their throat with two deft swishes.

However, the commotion brought out more Pakistanis and Hav Gyan Bahadur was fired upon for over half an hour from several directions. He dived into a small depression and waited with baited breath for the firing to end. After some time, two Pakistanis including a JCO cautiously approached him. Pretending to be dead, **Gyan Bahadur Tamang** lay absolutely still, his khukri hidden under his body. As one of the Pakistanis kicked him to see if he was dead, he sprang at them with Jai Mahakali Ayo Gorkhali and, before the petrified Pakistanis could react, he hacked them to death, ran, rolled, jumped and rolled downhill as bullets

whizzed around him. At night, he crept under a bush, chewed its tender leaves for energy before he fell asleep, completely exhausted.

Suffering from acute loss of blood, dehydration, high fever and complete exhaustion, Hav Gyan Bahadur woke up the next morning unsure of his bearings. Lacking the strength to make another attempt to rejoin his battalion on Khalubar, he half walked, half stumbled downhill. He spotted two burly Pakistanis walking towards him carrying grenades and ammunition and chatting. There was nowhere to run. He hid behind a boulder close to the track and, with a superhuman effort, once again shouting the battlecry pounced on them with his ever-ready khukri. Startled, the Pakistanis dropped their loads and ran. Tired and on the verge of despair, **Havaldar Gyan Bahadur Tamang** continued his rather eventful journey downhill till he finally stumbled into the battalion's rear near Yaldor village.

The soldiers of 1/11 **Gorkha Rifles** while mopping up, found the bodies of all the seven Pakistani soldiers who fell to Gyan Bahadur's khukri. Havaldar Gyan Bahadur Tamang was awarded Sena Medal (Gallantry) for displaying exemplary bravery & courage during Kargil War. ■

Havaldar Gyan Bahadur Tamang was part of the CO's column of attack on the night during operation Vijay in 1999. The hair-raising story of his exploits during the attack is exemplary.

Gyan Bahadur Tamang was ordered to move behind an enemy position to cut them off from their reinforcements. The enemy spotted the movement and in the fire-fight that ensued, Havaldar Gyan Bahadur and his buddy were separated from others. In the exchange of fire, both were hit. While his colleague made the supreme sacrifice, Gyan Bahadur Tamang fell backwards and rolled downhill some twenty metres before he passed out with blood oozing from his neck. A light drizzle revived him the next morning and he came to his senses with the sound of automatic weapons and artillery shells landing all around him. He was soon spotted and eight Pakistani soldiers began to fire on him with their AK-47 assault rifles while he dashed around from one boulder to another. Displaying remarkable shooting skills under extreme pressure and with utmost fire discipline, Gyan Bahadur Tamang shot dead three Pakistanis.

poems

These three poems are being
reproduced in memory of
Mr. Ian C. Masson
who inspired an entire
generation of Kalimpong kids to
write...

THE LEGACY

What would I leave behind
But a worn out name
And a forgotten face
Buried on an evening
Away from memory,
Who does hear an unsung song-
And what wind weep for me-
Who will bring me grave flowers
When you meet your own destiny
On a cool and moonless night??
We all leave behind a world
Of million pains to come-
Million births and million deaths
That will erase you and me
With every grave they plant.

RAINBOWS

I have walked the rolling hills
And I have seen the folded plains
I have touched the angry waves
And I have sailed the satin clouds.

I have chased many rainbows
From the high hills to the lowlands
To the sea under each sky
Yes, the rainbow under every sky.

Every place I have seen
And covered with a changing sky
Some were sunny, others dark,
With rainbows everywhere.

THE HOME COMING

Anchor me here
In the sea of your love
And lay me down
By the sands of your shores
For the night's come
And my tired dreams ache-
But most of all,
I need someone to love

TULSI GHIMEREY

AN INSPIRATION FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Please tell us about your childhood days in Kalimpong and about your family here.

Happy memories of any childhood which makes one smile even after five decades ought to be the best childhood one can have. My childhood memories still make me smile even after 65 years. Mine was a childhood which not too many are privileged to have- may be not in terms of material comfort but in terms of mental and emotional happiness and satisfaction. Born into a farming family in Sindabong, Kalimpong, my childhood was spent in the open paddy fields and the lush green hillsides. Anyone who has had the privilege of running bare-footed in the muddy fields during ones childhood will testify that nothing can be sweeter than the sweet smell of that moist mud. It remains a life time and the nostalgia of it remains fresh in my senses even today.

As for education, I started at Mani Memorial School at Sindabong and then SUMI. I received my college education at Kalimpong College. I was a normal kid doing all the usual things expected of rural kid- things like bringing back home the Weekly shopping every Saturday etc. *Khola Khelnu* (chilling out by the river) at Rellie River was of course my favourite time-pass.

I have two brothers and a sister and I was the eldest child of the family.

What made you interested in a career in films and how did you join the film industry?

Like most kids, I too went to school just because I had to. It was something which just had to be done. But when I was in Class 7,

my teacher, Mr. B.C.Simick, one day asked the class what they wanted to become in life. He asked us to answer him after three days. I spend these three days thinking of what career I would want. I debated about going to the Army or joining the Police force but then I realized that only one thing kept coming back to my mind and that was a career in films. After three days when I had to answer Mr. B.C.Simick's question, I told him what was in my mind. He answered that if I had really made up my mind about a career in films then he could not help me as there was no one in Kalimpong who had previously had experience in the film industry. He said that I had to help myself if I was serious. I, of course had no clue about it and hence this desire remained dormant within me all through school and college. After college I started working with the Central Water & Power Commission in Sikkim.

It was here that I had the good fortune to get acquainted with some members of a film unit which was shooting in Sikkim at that time. The film being shot was "Romeo in Sikkim". A cameraman working at the unit, with whom I had shared my dream of working in films, one day asked me if I had heard of the Urdu word *Fanna*. I knew it meant getting destroyed in the pursuit of a desire. He told me that if my desire was so strong that I was willing to even get destroyed in its pursuit, then I should go to Bombay and try my hand there.

I left my job immediately and with Rs. 500.00, borrowed from my father, I set off to Bombay with nothing else but the burning desire to join the film industry.

Please tell us about the journey from the slopes of Sindabong to the dazzling heights of stardom in Bombay and Kathmandu.

Like I said, I set off to Bombay with nothing but the burning desire to join the film industry. I literally started from the footpaths of Bombay. I started doing the rounds of film

studios and took up the jobs of spot boy and light boy etc just to be around the studios. I graduated to becoming a Make-up Assistant, to an extra artist and even a stuntman. In the film *Amir Garib*, Dev Anand had to do a scene in which he was shown jumping through a glass window and land in the ground below, it was me who did stunt. I agreed to do this dangerous stunt for just Rs. 500.00. Such was my desperation. The scene went off so well that the director actually paid me Rs. 2,000.00. In the films *Laila Majnu*, I was a duplicate for Rishi Kapoor in a few scenes.

Then one day I somehow chanced upon film editing. There I met the Mr. G.G.Patil, a film editor himself. On opening my heart to him, he took pity on me and referred me to the Mr. Kamalakar Karkhanis of Film Center. He employed me as his assistant and there was no looking back after that. After doing 23 films as Assistant Editor I started my career as a full editor. I edited 8 full Bollywood films and won a President's award for the film "*Shrandanjali*". Here I would also like to point out that I have also directed and edited the first Garwali film ever made.

Did you do any specialized training in film acting or film direction?

No I did not do any specialized training. The footpaths of Bombay were my greatest teacher.

You have worked with all the top names in the Hindi and Nepali film world. Tell us some of your favourite actors/actresses and your experience with working with them.

I have had the fortune to work with some of the biggest names in Bollywood and almost all the big names in the Nepali Film Industry. Having worked

with Amitabh Bachchan (as Chief Editor of the blockbuster film Amar Akbar Anthony), Sanjiv Kumar, Deepak Parashar, Vinod Khanna, Suresh Oberoi and Rakhee Gulzar etc and having launched many of the superstars of the Nepali Film Industry like Bhuan KC, Niruta Singh, Tripti Nadkar and Pushpal, it would not be fair of me to say who is my favourite. But I have to admit that I had and have the greatest respect for Sanjiv Kumar. He was on a different league all together. I look back at my association with Gulzar Saheb with much pride. Just following him around, carrying his *jhola* (bag) was an honour for me.

You have made blockbuster films like Darpan Chaya 1 & 2, Dakshina, Luhure & Kusume Rimal. Which is your favourite?

Like a mother who is proud of all her children and who loves them equally, I, as a film director, too am proud of all the films I have created. All of them have been like my children whom I gave birth and nurtured with utmost care and love. I have no favourites as such. Though I must admit that making Dakshina gave me the most satisfaction because it was shot in my *alma mater* SUMI and gave me the opportunity to work with my teachers and friends.

You are one of the biggest names in the Nepali Film Industry and with this comes with a lot of fame and star power. How do you deal with this fame and stardom?



To answer this question I must quote the great Kesto Mukherjee, the famous Bollywood comedian. He once had said, "Stardom and fame are like heavy blankets on a summer day. They must be thrown away or the journey will be impossible to complete".

I too firmly believe that fame and stardom are such big burdens that it is best not to carry them around. Of course with good work these two follow but I have never let them affect my dealings with people. Probably this is why I am still so accessible to everyone around me.

Do you have plans to train the next generation from Kalimpong in film-making? Maybe something like starting a film institute or even just conducting workshops-


Kalimpong in specific and the Hills of Darjeeling in general have given me so much love and respect that now it is my turn to give back. The reason I stay in Kalimpong most of the time now, despite so many offers from all over, is that I have several plans in the pipe-line for this region. I plan to open up a production house here which would give opportunities to local talent to shine on a broader platform. Of course there are various

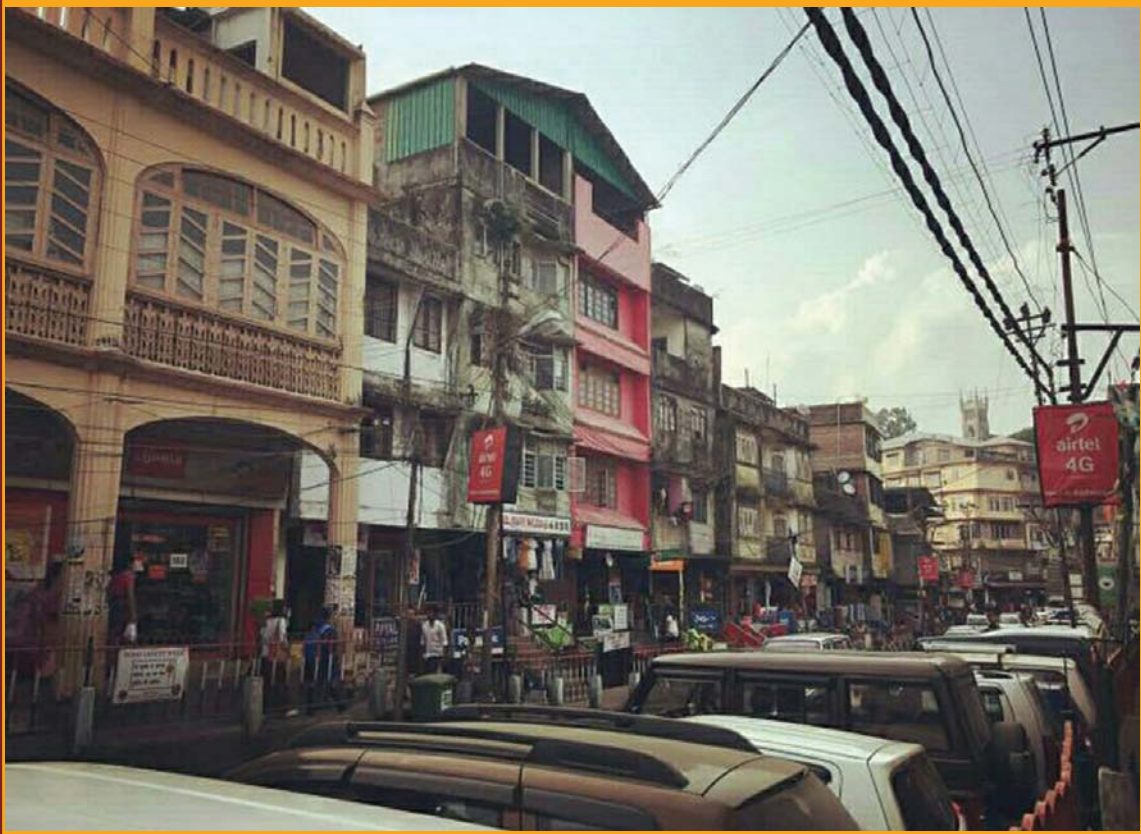
other avenues I am looking at so that the next gen from the region can progress in the film line with better knowledge and training. I do not want them to take the Bombay footpath route to success, that I was forced to take.

With more than 1.5 crore Gorkhas in India, do you think it is time now for the Indian Gorkhas to have their own Film Industry rather than still relying on Kollywood (Nepal Film Industry) to tell their own stories?

Yes definitely. Sikkim or the GTA has to take the lead in charting out a plan for a Indian Nepali Film Industry. Nepali language is in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution and there is no reason why Nepali films made in India cannot find platforms in this Nation of 1.5 crore Nepalis speaking people. The Nepali film industry has many jewels who have been Indians. Stars like Niruta Singh, Sachin Singh, Ranjit Gajmere, B.S. Thapa, Hira Singh, Ashok Sharma, Tripti Natkar and many more are all Indians and have been pillars to the Nepali Film Industry. I am sure they would lead the way if a Nepali Film Industry opens up in the country of their birth. It's just a matter of good planning and some amount of funding, both of which are not actually lacking.

What is your advice to those in the Hills of Darjeeling who aspire to enter the film world?

My advice to all those who want to make a career in the film industry is- first and foremost they must understand that the road is not all rosy and bright. The pitfalls are many and only very dedicated and devoted people can succeed. They have to be steadfast in their resolve to succeed and must be prepared to put in long hard hours. The glamour that one sees on screen is very superficial. One has to shed buckets of sweat for attaining that glamour. 



MAIN ROAD OF KALIMPONG- THEN & NOW

